

Expressive Arts and Design – Being Imaginative and Expressive – Reception Curriculum Framework

Educational Purpose

We develop confident and imaginative children who use music, movement, story and role play to express ideas, feelings and experiences. Children build a growing repertoire of songs, rhymes and stories, explore rhythm and sound, develop narratives through imaginative play and increasingly create, perform and respond alongside others.

Golden Threads

Imagine & Create	Music & Rhythm	Perform & Collaborate
Children use experiences, ideas and imagination to create narratives, roles, movements, sounds and performances.	Children listen and respond to music, develop a repertoire of songs and rhymes, explore rhythm and sound, and increasingly reproduce and create musical patterns.	Children increasingly share songs, rhymes, stories, movement and imaginative play with others, responding to ideas and developing performances or narratives together.

Knowledge = what children are taught to know and understand. Skills = how children increasingly apply that knowledge.

Strand	Typical Starting Points	DP1	DP2	DP3	Statutory ELG
Music, Rhythm & Movement KNOWLEDGE	- Respond to familiar music through movement, sound or gesture. - Join in with parts of familiar songs, rhymes or actions.	- I know music can sound different. - I know my voice, body, instruments and objects can make sounds. - I know songs and rhymes have words and sounds that repeat. - I know music can give me ideas for how to move.	- I know songs and rhymes can be remembered and repeated. - I know sounds can be put together to make a pattern. - I know music can be fast or slow. - I know voices, bodies and instruments can be used in different ways to make music.	- I know sounds and rhythms can be repeated, changed or created. - I know changing a sound or rhythm can change the music we make. - I know different music can suggest different ways to move. - I know making music with others involves listening and responding to each other.	- Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher; - Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs; - Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and – when appropriate – try to move in time with music.
Music, Rhythm & Movement SKILLS	- Explore making sounds with their voice, body, objects or instruments. - Use familiar experiences in simple pretend play. - Pretend that an object represents something else.	- I can listen to different music and show a response through movement, gesture, sound or words. - I can join in with familiar songs, nursery rhymes and repeated phrases. - I can explore different sounds using my voice, body, instruments and objects. - I can copy a simple rhythm or sound pattern with support. - I can explore different ways of moving in response to music.	- I can sing familiar songs and rhymes, remembering an increasing amount. - I can copy and repeat a simple rhythm or sound pattern. - I can create a simple sound or rhythm pattern with support where needed. - I can use my voice, body and instruments in different ways to make sounds. - I can change my movement in response to music, including whether it is faster or slower. - I can join with others in familiar songs, rhymes, music and movement.	- I can sing a growing repertoire of familiar songs and nursery rhymes from memory. - I can create and repeat a simple rhythm or sound pattern. - I can adapt a familiar rhythm, sound or musical idea. - I can move expressively in response to music, increasingly responding to differences I hear. - I can sing, play, move or perform with others, listening and responding as part of the group.	
Imagination, Narrative & Performance KNOWLEDGE	- Imitate familiar people, actions or events in play. - Play alongside or with other children in imaginative play.	- I know pretend play can be about people, places and things I know. - I know an object can become something different when I pretend. - I know things can happen in stories and pretend play. - I know pretend play can be shared with other people.	- I know stories and pretend play can have a sequence of things that happen. - I know a role or character helps shape what happens in pretend play. - I know stories I know can give me ideas for pretend play. - I know people can add different ideas to shared play.	- I know stories and pretend play can be invented or changed. - I know a storyline connects the things that happen in a story or play. - I know ideas from stories and experiences can be changed to create something new. - I know other people's ideas can help us develop a story or performance together.	
Imagination, Narrative & Performance SKILLS	Respond to or join in with familiar stories.	- I can use familiar experiences, stories or ideas as a starting point for pretend play. - I can take on a familiar role or character in play. - I can use objects, actions, words or sounds to represent ideas in imaginative play. - I can link two or more ideas or actions in pretend play. - I can join another child's imaginative play and begin to respond to their ideas.	- I can develop a simple storyline in pretend play. - I can take on a role or character and use words, actions or expression to represent it. - I can use ideas from familiar stories and experiences in imaginative play. - I can respond to another child's idea and add an idea of my own. - I can recreate part of a familiar story, rhyme or experience through play or performance.	- I can invent or adapt a simple narrative or storyline through imaginative play. - I can develop and sustain a role or character within play. - I can develop a storyline over a connected sequence of events. - I can listen and respond to others' ideas and contribute ideas when developing imaginative play together. - I can recount or perform a familiar or created story with others using words, actions, movement or expression.	
ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY	music – sounds organised for listening, singing, playing or moving song – words and music sung together rhyme – words with the same or similar ending sounds story – a sequence of events that is told or acted out play – using actions, ideas and imagination to explore or pretend	sound – something we can hear pretend – to act as if something is real or different instrument – something used to make musical sounds move – to change the position or action of the body repeat – to do or make something again	pattern – sounds, actions or ideas arranged in a way that repeats rhythm – a pattern of long, short or repeated sounds or beats role – the part someone takes in pretend play or a performance character – a person, animal or imagined figure in a story or play fast / slow – words that describe how quickly music or movement happens	adapt – to change something to make it different narrative – a story or account of connected events perform – to share a song, rhyme, story, music or movement with others storyline – the connected events that make up a story or play create – to make or develop an idea of your own	

Typical Starting Points describe possible prior experiences, not entry expectations. Children may demonstrate aspects of more than one Development Point at the same time.

Being Imaginative & Expressive Entitlement

Every child will:

- Experience a rich and varied range of music, including music with different sounds, rhythms, speeds, moods and cultural traditions.
- Build and revisit a shared repertoire of nursery rhymes, songs and poems across Reception.
- Have regular opportunities to sing together, join in with rhymes and poems, and increasingly recall familiar material from memory.
- Explore sound using their voice, body, instruments and everyday objects.
- Have frequent opportunities to listen and respond to music through sound, talk, gesture and expressive movement.
- Explore, copy, repeat and increasingly create and adapt simple rhythms and sound patterns.
- Experience stories, storytelling and rich first-hand experiences that provide ideas for imaginative play and narrative.
- Have sustained opportunities for pretend and role play, supported by flexible resources that can be transformed through imagination.
- Use puppets, small world, role play, movement, music and storytelling to represent ideas, experiences and imagined events.
- Develop and sustain roles and storylines, both independently and collaboratively with others.
- Be supported to listen to, respond to and build upon other children's ideas while contributing ideas of their own.
- Have opportunities to invent, recreate and adapt stories, roles, movement, sounds and performances.
- Share songs, rhymes, poems, stories, music and imaginative ideas in pairs, small groups and larger groups.
- Encounter adults who sing, tell stories, make music, move expressively, imagine and play alongside children, modelling creative processes.
- Have their imaginative and expressive ideas valued without there being one prescribed way that finished play, story, movement or performance should look.

Performance is an entitlement, not a test of confidence. Children may demonstrate imaginative and expressive development through singing with others, small-group play, storytelling, puppetry, movement, music-making and collaborative imaginative play. Children should not be required to perform publicly in order to demonstrate secure learning.

Nursery Rhyme Repertoire

Children encounter and repeatedly revisit a planned repertoire of nursery rhymes and songs across Reception. Repetition supports familiarity, participation, memory, rhythm, rhyme, language and increasingly independent shared performance. This is a curriculum entitlement, not an individual assessment checklist.

Autumn	Spring	Summer
• Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star • Baa, Baa, Black Sheep • Incy Wincy Spider • Humpty Dumpty • Row, Row, Row Your Boat • Five Little Ducks	• The Grand Old Duke of York • Hickory Dickory Dock • One, Two, Buckle My Shoe • Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes • Old MacDonald Had a Farm • If You're Happy and You Know It	• London Bridge Is Falling Down • A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea • Down in the Jungle • The Wheels on the Bus • She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain • One Finger, One Thumb, Keep Moving

Poetry Basket

Children encounter and revisit a planned selection of poems across Reception. Poems are heard, enjoyed, discussed, joined in with and increasingly remembered and performed. The Poetry Basket broadens children's experience of language, rhythm, imagery and expression beyond the nursery rhyme repertoire. It is a curriculum entitlement, not an individual assessment checklist.

Autumn	Spring	Summer
• Chop Chop • Falling Apples • Leaves Are Falling • Breezy Weather • Wise Old Owl • Who Has Seen the Wind?	• I Can Build a Snowman • Popcorn • Pancakes • Spring Wind • Hungry Birdies • Little Seed	• Under a Stone • I Have a Little Frog • A Little Shell • Pitter Patter • Five Little Peas • Dance

Assessment

- Notice what children increasingly know and can do over time: repertoire, recreation, rhythm, movement, symbolic play, roles, narrative, adaptation, collaboration and sharing.
- Assessment should arise primarily through observation, interaction and children's participation over time.
- A finished performance is not the assessment. Assess the knowledge, choices, imagination, repertoire, collaboration and expressive development demonstrated through the process.
- The Nursery Rhyme Repertoire and Poetry Basket are curriculum entitlements, not assessment checklists.

Transition to Key Stage 1

By the end of Reception, children have developed a repertoire of familiar songs, nursery rhymes and poems and are increasingly able to recall and perform these with others. They use their voices, bodies, instruments and objects to explore, repeat and create sounds and rhythms, and respond imaginatively to music through movement. Through storytelling and play, children take on roles, use objects symbolically, develop connected storylines, adapt familiar ideas and collaborate with others. These foundations support Key Stage 1 Music, English and Drama, where pupils sing and perform together, explore and create musical patterns, participate in discussion and performance, and develop narratives and characters. Transition information should identify each child's strengths and next steps in musical repertoire, rhythm, expressive movement, imaginative play, storytelling, collaboration and confidence in sharing ideas, together with any strategies or adaptations that support successful participation.